

INTERNAL BULLETIN 77

DECEMBER 1983

Contents:

Youth and student circular Joplin

Branch circular, including report of
November 19 National Committee

'Discussing imperialism' Kinnell
(Appendix: the Argentine left on the
elections; Ali's article from IB 71
reprinted)

'Our international work' Cunliffe

'On the USFI: fundamentals
first, tactics second' Kinnell

Next NC Jan. 7

10 to 9.30, in London. Provisional agenda:
political situation, magazine, unemployed work
and WF.

The paper

Please - feature articles in by Saturday, re-
ports by Monday. Allow two days for 1st class
mail. You can phone in reports but not, please,
feature articles. Send to the address given in
the fund column, not N8 or PO Box. Write on
one side of the paper only.

FINANCE

* Accounts for dues etc. have just
gone out. Please pay any amounts
owing promptly.

Every comrade must return a new
dues assessment, on the new dues
rates which started in August.

Many comrades owe arrears on
dues. Though often small individu-
ally, these arrears add up. A few
comrades risk lapsing if they do
not pay up immediately.

Several comrades still owe from
levies for conference, NC pooled
fare, or the branch organisers'
meeting. The principle here is that
those who do not attend such meet-
ings must share the cost with those
who do.

* Generally our finances are in a
very bad way. In terms of the
revised budget we made in June this
year, the crucial reasons why are:

- Poor paper sales income. In-
come has gone down, not up, since
June, although branch paper orders
have gone up modestly. Cd Levy is
organising a drive on paper sales.
- Very poor fund income.

* In the July-October fund-raising
period, only four branches organis-
ed any fund-raising event, and only
four others organised any donations
from non-supporters. For viability
we need every branch organising
such fund-raising. Start now!!

International

Many thanks to the comrades who
have already contributed to the
fund appeal for the international
meeting in San Francisco with PTT
and SF. We've had to postpone the
meeting to (probably) April 29-30,
because SF can't make it this
month: but now we need the money
even more, because we'll need to
help SF with their fare.

YOUTH AND STUDENTS

PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT THIS IS READ BY EVERY COMRADE UNDER 26 AND EVERY STUDENT.

1 BY NOW EVERY AREA SHOULD HAVE SORTED OUT YM REGIONAL CONFERENCE PREPARATIONS.

make sure you have a meeting room booked, that we have candidates standing in every election, including things like the Standing Orders Committee. Contact non-Militant Yms and ask them to invite our candidate for the NC to speak to their meeting. If you need a speaker from the centre then make sure you phone in soon. Phone in anyway and let us know that you are planning a fringe meeting and so on. Leaflets should be produced which advertise the meeting, ~~xxxxx~~ and explain our politics. Be careful that the leaflet does explain that we are not just interested in CND, gay rights etc.

If the Residential social workers dispute is still on think about inviting a speaker, the dispute ties in well with our positions on labour councils etc.

2 YM national conference. This is on April 20-23rd, in Bridlington. Closing date for resolutions is Jan 20th. Motions will be sent out in a CX circular this weekend. If anyone has a special request then please let us know.

Accommodation. This will cost between 10 and 12 quid, no-one will be allowed to rip us off as they did last year. Comrades who will have difficulty in paying at one go should sent it in bit by bit, payable to the League.

Attendance. Unless agreed with the centre all League members under 26 should go. that includes comrades who are not especially active in a Y's.

Comrades who are over 26 and can come are very welcome.

Contacts. Start now, go around and see contacts, persuade them to go. We want to use Conf as we used summer scamp, to finally recruit contacts by integrating them and showing how absolutely wonderful we are.

MONEY. Conference always cost a bomb. Buying paper, producing a new pamphlet, paying for FT travel and accommodation runs up a bill for about £250. Meeting rooms will cost another £130.

Branches should start discussing how they can help us pay for the intervention. YMs should hold a fund-raiser for us as well as to cover their own travel costs.

EMPLOYED COMRADES ARE ASKED TO MAKE A DONATION. YOUTH COMRADES WHO DO NOT GO TO CONF WILL BE LEVIED THE FULL COST.

3 STUDENT WORK. NUS Conference went fairly well for us. There is a SSIS meeting in Manchester on Jan 21 and 22nd. This is a NOLS student council which will decide the slate for NUS Exec. On the Sat SSIX will be meeting. All Labour Clubs are to send a delegate to the Council meeting. Any LX member who is on a SU Exec and is a member of NOLS can vote at the council.

Exec members who do not have a LC in their college can apply for associate membership of NOLS by writing to them and asking. Make sure this is done.

There will be SSIX conf on Feb 26th. There is a problem with the SL, who want to turn it into a student briefing. Every student should attend, and bring contacts.

There will be an SX student meeting some time in late Jan/Feb. Comrades should attend.

Students in colleges with out a LC should make sure they set one up right at the start of next term. The closing date for new clubs being accepted into membership is Jan 20th. Details of how to set up a club are in the first issue of SS.

BRANCH ORGANISERS SHOULD MAKE SURE THIS IS DONE. COMRADES SHOULD CONTACT THE CENTRE ABOUT NEW CLUBS IMMEDIATELY. DO NOT WAIT TILL AFTER CHRISTMAS.

A SSIX mailing will go out this week with details about motions into conf. etc.

THERE WILL BE A LEAGUE YOUTH CADRE SCHOOL IN JANUARY. MORE DETAILS FOLLOWING.

NGA/NUJ

Anything written on the situation with the NGA/NUJ and the courts is going to be out of date by the time that comrades read it. A brief outline of what we have been doing centrally so far may however be useful.

* The NGA. What the NGA does is obviously central. It is, however, very difficult for us to influence. The NGA is a bureaucratic and rather conservative union, and we have only one active member in it.

Since the crisis blew up, there have been NGA Broad Left and NGA London Region meetings: but, with the left in the NGA dominated by the CP, they have done no more than make militant general statements and support the NGA leadership. Beyond that, what we can do in the NGA itself is largely confined to individual propaganda. Please inform the centre if you have any NGA contacts locally.

* The NUJ. The NUJ has much less influence on the situation. The contempt of court hearing which may lead to it getting fined is quite likely to be postponed until after the NGA dispute is settled. If the NGA takes action, the NUJ will be locked out anyway. But we have much more scope for intervening in the NUJ.

Right-wingers on the NUJ Executive have raised the call for a special conference (in January), and are likely to win it at an Executive meeting this weekend. We have opposed it as a weakening of the union's stand: there is already conference policy for defiance of the law, and the Executive should implement it. We are also pressing for a statement of solidarity with the NGA and a commitment in principle to industrial action.

* The Warrington picket line. At the time of writing it is not clear whether the mass pickets will be re-started by the NGA, but if they are of course we should mobilise.

The comrades in the North West have been active in mobilising for this picket line over the last period of weeks, and a large number of branches mobilised quite well for the big mass picket on November 29.

* The TUC. We organised a lobby of the TUC on Monday November 21. Resolutions should be sent in demanding that the TUC calls a 24 hour general strike and prepares for an all-out general strike.

* Other unions. Comrades should push resolutions urging that the union commits itself to strike along with the NGA; if there is sufficient strength locally, we should urge that individual workplaces commit themselves to strike along with the NGA.

* Campaign against anti-union laws. Over the last few weeks we have been pursuing the idea of re-launching something on the same political lines as the Mobilising Committee for the Defence of Trade Union Rights, but on a much larger scale and with an immediate focus on the NGA dispute.

The main effort has been in Merseyside, where there already is a local Campaign Committee against the anti-union laws. This committee has been very active around the Warrington mass pickets; it has some real weight in the local labour movement; and many of its members are to the left of the Militant and the CP, which between them dominate most of the labour movement on Merseyside.

People on the committee were initially receptive to the idea of their committee launching a national campaign. But we ourselves have no close supporter on the committee (though we have been making efforts to remedy this). After the NGA called off the mass pickets, the committee seems to have marked time. Whether we can change this now remains to be seen.

In any case local Trades Councils can be urged to set up Campaign Committees: these will be useful locally, even if we cannot find a way to link them up into a national campaign. If your local Trades Council is immovable, you can try to create a Campaign Committee through other channels.

Residential workers

We have one comrade very actively involved in this dispute. A lengthy discussion was organised with this comrade and EC/NC members on November 10, and we worked out the following policy:

- * Fight for all-out strike action by NALGO in local government.

- * Fight for a special recall local government conference of NALGO to get such strike action.

- * There is no solution to the problem of emergency cover in the homes outside of such extended strike action. All-out strike action by the residential workers alone, without cover, is no answer: for reasons both of socialist principle and of tactical judgment, we cannot leave the people in the homes without cover. But equally we cannot approve of letting scabs in to cover.

- * From this viewpoint, we have to support the call for escalated action by a ban on night working and weekend working, but critically. We are in favour of escalating action by the residential workers themselves, but this is not the best way.

There was a brief report and discussion at the NC on November 19, also at the NALGO fraction meeting on December 3.

Some comrades, however, have expressed disagreement with the policy outlined above, and we are seeking to organise further discussions.

Comrades who have contact with the dispute locally should liaise with comrade Levy.

Health cuts

As comrades will have seen, an information bulletin has been started on this work, and a series of regional meetings are being held.

National Committee

The National Committee met on November 19.

COUNCILS: it was agreed that specific mention of Camden should be deleted from the document passed at the October 15 NC, pending further discussion.

INTERNATIONAL WORK: Documents were presented by Cunliffe and Kinnell. The following resolution was carried.

a) We propose to the December meeting sets up some sort of organised liaison between ourselves, the PTT, and SF.

For: 13 (Carolan, Fraser, Gunther, Hill, Jagger, Joplin, Kinnell, Lewis, Matthews, Parkinson, Parsons, Strummer, Whetling). Against: 5 (Cunliffe, Jones, Levy, Piggot, Smith).

b) We propose a joint international bulletin, to be produced by the WSL in English, French and German (and if possible other languages). This should normally be public, though special supplements internal to WSL/PTT/SF could be produced.

For: 12 (the above 13, minus Parsons). Against: 5 (the above 5, plus Parsons). An amendment to make the bulletin internal only was lost.

c) Through written discussion and occasional international meetings, we attempt to develop joint documents with PTT and SF on major political questions. The three groups should also discuss the work of all of us in our home arenas.

For: 14 (the above 12, plus Cunliffe and Parsons). Against: 4 (Jones, Levy, Piggot, Smith).

[Section (d) of the resolution was defeated - see below.]

e) We seek contacts and dialogue with other forces, including those Trotskyist groups we already have some relations with.

(Section (e)): For: 13 (Carolan, Cunliffe, Fraser, Gunther, Hill, Jagger, Joplin, Kinnell, Lewis, Matthews, Parkinson, Whettling). Against: 4 (Jones, Levy, Piggot, Smith). Abst: 1 (Parsons).

f) The international bulletin should be edited with a view to being a tool for intervention in relation to the USFI. Projects like Cunliffe's pamphlet on Cuba will fit well into this plan.

For: 10 (Carolan, Fraser, Gunther, Hill, Joplin, Kinnell, Lewis, Matthews, Parkinson, Whettling). Against: 5 (Jones, Levy, Parsons, Piggot, Smith). Abst: 3 (Cunliffe, Jagger, Strummer).

g) Prior to any approach to the USFI for fusion discussions, we should attempt to formulate a clear principled outline assessment of the USFI and its place in the world Trotskyist spectrum, in the WSL and jointly with the SF and the PTT.

For: 13 (the above 10 plus Jagger, Parsons, Strummer). Against: 1 (Piggot). Abst: 4 (Cunliffe, Jones, Levy, Smith).

Another resolution was carried unanimously: that we discuss with the PTT the possibility of them joining the Socialist Action faction in the USA.

A resolution, the text of which is not to hand, was put by Cunliffe advocating that we approach the USFI internationally, jointly with the PTT and SF, for fusion discussions, with the possibility of us applying to become a sympathising section of the USFI. This was defeated:

For: 2 (Cunliffe, Parsons). Against: all other comrades bar two or three abstentions, including Jones, Smith.

Section (d) of the resolution above was defeated. This ran:

d) The international link-up [WSL-SF-PTT] should declare firmly, but without any grandiloquence or false pretences, that it, and not the RWL/LOR, represents the continuity of TILC.

For: 7 (Carolan, Fraser, Hill, Joplin, Kinnell, Lewis, Matthews). Against: 8 (Cunliffe, Jagger, Jones, Levy, Piggot, Smith, Strummer). Abst: 3 (Gunther, Parkinson, Whettling).

MAGAZINE: There was a discussion on the magazine and related matters, and it was agreed to continue the discussion within the NC up to and including the next NC (January 7). That NC may take a vote; before a final decision there will be further consultation with the membership.

NGA DISPUTE: There was a brief discussion: it was agreed to make efforts to re-launch a national campaign on the lines of the MCDTUR.

MOTIONS OF CENSURE: From Smith: "That the coverage of the September 17 conference in the paper was biased. It did not reflect the actual conference but was altered towards the majority's politics. For example Carolan's wind-up speech was presented as the opening keynote speech whilst my opening speech, and that of od. Andrea, were carried a week later and presented as discussion articles: i.e. we don't agree with this article, but here it is as a matter of interest for 'discussion'.

"This is a small matter in itself, but it is important in that it is representative of the undemocratic way the majority is running the movement and the way they regard the majority they have on a number of political issues as the authority to dominate bureaucratically on anything they feel is important. If Carolan did not want me to make the opening contribution to the conference he should not have proposed that I do so. It is unacceptable that when he finds he does not agree with it he writes it out of the conference in its original context. (Despite the fact that I had agreed, after an EC discussion, not to say anything controversial about the Labour Party and had stuck to that".

Defeated, with 4 votes in favour - Cunliffe, Jones, Parsons, Smith.

(Points made in reply to the above motion included: It was decided at the EC before Sep. 17 that the summing-up, not the opening remarks, was the main speech from us. The heading 'discussion' was not pejorative, and was in fact used the previous week too. Smith has had free access to the paper for his minority faction views, and was asked to speak at the conference by the EC majority to integrate the minority and present a united front. Effectively Smith was demanding that minority faction views be presented as 'the line', and that could not be agreed).

From Smith: "The treatment of my article in the paper on the US invasion of Grenada is scandalous and should be condemned. It amounts to a well-known and well-tried system of censorship much used by the BBC and IBA by which unwanted criticism of the established order is allowed but neutralised by editorial intervention.

"The fact that I raised on the EC in advance whether or not an article written by me on Grenada and the world situation would be blocked by Carolan and Kinnell shows the pressures, as does my concession that it could be presented as a 'discussion article'. What happening in fact was that the article was given the least prominence possible and was subjected to a comparatively long introduction by Carolan who is one of the main opponents of it.

"The introduction introduces issues which are not mentioned in the article at all in order to influence the reader - such as the opposing views on Argentine defencism which were at the centre of the Malvinas debate. I make no mention of this yet the introduction chooses to introduce it. It goes on to summarise the arguments I use. Yet my article is hardly a problem for the reader, it is no longer than some of the letters on the letters page. The summary is of course slanted in a particular direction. He attributes to me for example the view that the Grenada invasion was 'organically linked' to the Falklands war. I never said that of course, it is a skilful way of exaggerating my point. It treats the Begin invasion of Lebanon in the same way. Carolan is saying - don't read this article objectively, this is the way to read it.

"All this is made worse by the fact that at the end of the article the reader is informed that there will be a reply next week anyway. So you undermine the article before it is read and then launch a major attack on it next week. Such a situation cannot be seen as a democratic regime.

"Finally my article was a signed article, when have other signed articles by supporters of Carolan been censored in the same way? There have been many articles sharply critical of WSL policy which have never had this treatment.

"WSL policy: the introduction starts by casting my article in the role of the minority view. It presents the positions of the paper during the war as if they have remained the same through until today. It ignores the fact that the WSL and therefore the paper's position changed at the special conference. The size of the majority is beside the point. Yet we have the incredible position that my article, written from the majority position, is presented as a discussion article and carefully censored, whilst Carolan and Kinnell are able to write articles from the minority view which are presented as straight policy of the paper.

"It is quite clear that the points I made which are contentious were all voted positions at the special conference. In particular the necessity to make an assessment of the 'world balance of forces' and the assessment that the British victory in the Malvinas war altered the balance of forces on a world scale to the advantage of imperialism. To write an article today assessing the extent to which the Grenada invasion was influenced by that must be legitimate in the paper. (The influence of the Falkland war on Begin's invasion of Lebanon was also voted on at the special conference).

"This creates a situation in the WSL which is contrary to all forms of communist democracy".

Defeated, 5 votes for (Cunliffe, Jagger, Jones, Parsons, Smith).

(Points made in reply included: The EC, having previously rejected Smith's position, had decided it would be presented as a discussion article. The introduction was necessary to explain what was in debate. The text of the introduction was commonly agreed between Carolan and Cunliffe - a supporter of Smith's view - after

The EC on November 19 voted for the following resolution from me:

Cunliffe had successfully objected to a first draft by Carolan. At worst it was within editorial judgment. The Falklands/Malvinas special conference could not imply a position on Grenada now. Indeed, that conference voted for a resolution explicitly saying that we had arrived at no clear position as regards general analysis of imperialism. The only people who have had articles banned from the paper for political reasons have been the present EC majority - on Poland, on Ireland. Again, Smith seemed to be demanding that his minority faction line should have the rights of a majority line).

From Hill: Motion to censure Cunliffe for taking a debate outside the NC before NC discussion, contrary to Clause 12:iii of the constitution. (Precise text of motion not to hand).

Vote tied 8-8 with 1 abstention, so the resolution fell.

(Points made in reply included: Cunliffe was not 'raising a political difference' - which is what the clause in the constitution referred to - but arguing against a new proposal which he thought was going to be pushed through the next NC).

RESIDENTIAL WORKERS: There was a discussion about the dispute, as mentioned above.

I don't think that the factional part is caused by theoretical differences on imperialism. A large part of it, in my view, is a self-protection logic of increasing factionalism which comes with Smith and Jones have got themselves into for such reasons as personal status.

But the difference on imperialism is a role. They are not just about specialised questions of economic theory, but about our fundamental picture of the modern world - and about how we see ourselves in relation to the rest of the world.

On imperialism and on the Labour Party I think the Oxford faction comes on have the same attitude. They have a basic stock of ideas derived from the WRP/SLL tradition, with some additions from the ELL tradition. Before the faction they were moving rapidly away from that stock of ideas. As late as January 1982, we were able to jointly agree on the following assessment:

For the 'Fabianist' WRP current, the independent role of the working class and Trotskyists was subordinated to a conception of global 'class camps', in which the Stalinist bureaucracy, petty bourgeois 'nationalists', leaders and sections of reformism were included in the 'proletarian' class camp in which the Trotskyists merely become respectable advisers and camp-followers.

"Without breaking from the fundamental 'objective', conception, some Trotskyists like the ELL emphasised the role of the 'subjective', right-life. They thus placed great stress on 'the party' as an organisational form, as a 'magic ingredient' to add to the objective process."

But the Oxford faction comes also distrust the ideas that some of us on the ELL have (over many years) developed in sharp differentiation from this 'camp' politics - from both its 'respectable adviser' variant and its 'self-proclaimed vanguard' variant. At the same time, they don't quite understand those ideas, and don't see how to argue against them. So they have a feeling of being pulled down a slippery slope into unknown unknowns; of being pulled away from what they had always thought was Trotskyist towards they don't know what; of losing their basic political identity.

That feeling of insecurity makes the factional hostility sharper and more unmanageable.

I know no answer to that feeling of insecurity other than to try to convince the comrades that there is firm ground on the other side; that the ideas of the majority, underdeveloped though they are, are still a more solid political foundation than much of the 'common wisdom' of post-1950 Trotskyism; that the

DISCUSSING IMPERIALISM

The EC on November 19 voted for the following resolution from me:

"In order to clarify the basic political issues behind the recurrent disputes - Middle East, Ireland, Grenada, Korean jet, EEC... - seen and presented by some comrades as based on different views of modern imperialism, we resolve immediately to open a discussion inside the WSL on our basic view of imperialism. We urge that this is conducted in the way appropriate to a discussion among revolutionaries of a scientific question. The Internal Bulletin should be opened to contributions, and a weekend school should be organised in the New Year. Initial bases for the discussion should be the TILC resolution on Central America (with reference to the 'anti-imperialist united front'), Kimmell/IB 49, and Ali/IB 72".

After the April conference, many of us hoped that the organisation could turn outwards, and settle down to a stable period of practical work. No-one would ask that the minority gave up their ideas, but only that they should await further experience before re-raising the issues.

It's not been like that. The factional heat in the organisation has got worse, not better, since April. It has even got worse since the August conference.

I don't think that the factional heat is caused by theoretical differences on imperialism. A large part of it, in my view, is a self-propelling logic of increasing factionalism which comrades Smith and Jones have got themselves into for such reasons as personal status.

But the differences on imperialism do play a role. They are not just about specialised questions of economic theory, but about our fundamental picture of the modern world - and about how we see ourselves in relation to the rest of the Left.

On imperialism and on the Labour Party I think the Oxford faction comrades have the same attitude. They have a basic stock of ideas derived from the WRP/SLL tradition, with some additions from the SL/IMG tradition. Before the fusion they were moving gingerly away from that stock of ideas. As late as January 1983, we were able to jointly agree on the following assessment:

For the 'Pabloite' USFI current] "The independent role of the working class and Trotskyists was submerged in a conception of global 'class camps' in which the Stalinist bureaucracy, petty bourgeois [nationalist] leaders and sections of reformism were included in the 'proletarian' class camp in which the Trotskyists merely became respectful advisers and camp-followers.

"Without breaking from the fundamental 'objectivist' conception, some Trotskyists [like the SLL] emphasised the role of the 'subjective' additive. They thus placed great stress on 'the party' as an organisational form, as a 'magic ingredient' to add to the objective process".

But the Oxford faction comrades also distrust the ideas that some of us on the EC have (over many years) developed in sharp differentiation from this 'camp' politics - from both its 'respectful adviser' variant and its 'self-proclaimed vanguard' variant. At the same time, they don't quite understand those ideas, and don't see how to argue against them. So they have a feeling of being pulled down a slippery slope into unknown quicksands; of being pulled away from what they had always thought was Trotskyism towards they don't know what; of losing their basic political identity.

That feeling of insecurity makes the factional hostilities sharper and more unmanageable.

I know no answer to that feeling of insecurity other than to try to convince the comrades that there is firm ground on the other side; that the ideas of the majority, underdeveloped though they are, are still a more solid political foundation than much of the 'common wisdom' of post-1950 Trotskyism; that the

orthodoxy which the comrades rely on is in fact an ideological mish-mash created over the '50s and '60s as would-be Trotskyists adopted ideas from the (often semi-Stalinist) broad left around them and recycled them with a clothing of Trotskyist phraseology.

The section on the corruption of the theory of permanent revolution in IB 49 (pp.29-30) gives an example of what I mean.

The task of convincing people politically is also the only answer to the bewilderment and demoralisation of many non-faction comrades who see the factional battles as increasingly destructive and irrelevant to their practical work.

My proposal for a discussion does not deal directly with the factional hostilities. It is, however, I think, a necessary supplement to any effort to deal with them.

As a contribution to the discussion I have written a reply to comrade Ali's article in IB 71. To make the reply as direct as possible, it is in the form of paragraph-by-paragraph comments.

"Why a reformist, negotiated solution to the Irish struggle? What are the links between these positions and others such as Palestine, where the same reformist, negotiated solutions have been advocated by Carolan, by not recognising Palestinians' right for self-determination, hence giving Zionists the right for a veto, the same as Protestants in Ireland..."

There are quite a few issues to disentangle in these first sentences. What makes the positions that Ali objects to, 'reformist'? Apparently the fact that they are to be 'negotiated' and involve recognising rights for groups like the Israeli Jews and the Irish Protestants.

The 'veto' issue is a red herring. A British law of 1949 gives the population of the artificially-drawn Six Counties unit of Northern Ireland a veto over any constitutional change in Ireland. Everyone in the WSL is against that 'veto'. There is no analogy in Palestine.

But any recognition of collective rights for the Protestants (or for the Israeli Jews) implies a 'veto' in the sense that it commits us to fight against certain arrangements on the grounds that they infringe on those rights: for example, to fight against a programme of 'drive the Protestants into the sea' or 'drive the Jews into the sea'.

What's 'reformist' about that? Ali seems to equate being 'revolutionary' with the most ruthless and macho Palestinian or Irish-Catholic nationalism/communalism.

The issue of 'negotiations' fits in here. We do not recognise any rights for Britain in Ireland. We do recognise that in fact a solution in Ireland (short of a socialist revolution sweeping both Ireland and Britain) will involve negotiations with the British government. There is nothing 'revolutionary' about refusing to recognise such a fact. Marxists are distinguished from nationalists, not by ultra-militancy for nationalist aims, but by different aims.

Within the framework of fighting for the basic rights of the oppressed, we do advocate negotiations, conciliation, mutual recognition of each others' rights, between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland, Arabs and Jews in Palestine. But Ali objects to that sort of negotiation too.

So it seems to me that here Ali is defining revolutionary politics not in terms of its social content, but in terms of ultra-militant, physical-force-on-principle tactics; not in terms of the solution best clearing the way for united working class struggle, but in terms of the most unconditional triumph of whatever group is identified as the 'anti-imperialist camp'.

production in 1980 when it should be 23%. Mind you, less factional zeal on Ali's part, and he might have noticed that the 1980 percentages add up to 105.

In 1910 LDCs produced no steel at all. In 1960 they produced 3.2% of the world total; in 1980, 10.1%. Certainly the ACCs still dominate. But isn't there a change?

I don't know where Ali gets the phrase "reduced reliance" from. I suspect excessive factional zeal again. I can find the words used in IB 49 only in a different context: "some countries seem to have reduced their reliance on particular primary products".

"These examples can be increased. Kinnell makes these figures talk in his documents, but in a manipulative way, in a way that he wants them to talk to prove his conclusions."

Hardly a comprehensive critique of the statistics in IB 49! Ali seems to share the lordly disdain for precise facts and figures of the author of IB 7: "whatever any figures say, they cannot change political reality" i.e. they cannot change the writer's view of what reality is.

"But more importantly, he misses out the fundamental character of the post-war industrialisation in the LDCs. That it has been done through borrowing... The subordinate character of this so-called 'industrialisation', because of it being phoney, not developing from the organic process but being injected from outside".

Ali seems to have a rather touching picture of real (not 'phoney') capitalist industrialisation. It has to be done by the capitalist saving money under his mattress and not borrowing a penny. On this theory, practically all capitalist development anywhere is 'phoney'!

Or perhaps some borrowing is permitted in 'real' industrialisation? Maybe it is only borrowing from foreigners that makes it 'phoney'?

Not many capitalist countries' industrialisation would escape the charge of being 'phoney' even then.

The US in the 19th century had a higher ratio of debt to national income than Brazil has today. Tsarist Russia had a huge foreign debt. For reasons of that sort the Populists argued (in very much the same terms as Ali) that Russia's industrialisation was "phoney, not developed from the organic process but being injected from outside". Lenin condemned such "efforts to prove that this disproportionate, spasmodic, feverish development is not development", and the attempt to measure reality against some abstract norm of 'real' capitalist development rather than recognising reality and starting from the contradictions within it.

Call industrialisation 'phoney' if you like. It doesn't wish away the real factories, steelworks, and construction sites.

The problem here, I think, is that once again Ali is accepting the terms of debate set by middle class nationalism. He accepts 'real' development (i.e. real capitalist development) and economic self-sufficiency (i.e. development without anything "injected from outside") as the aims, instead of starting from a socialist and internationalist critique of those aims. Presumably he would differentiate from the nationalists by proposing the socialist revolution and the revolutionary party as the means... to achieve the nationalist goals.

"It is this very character of LDCs' development, i.e. massive borrowing from finance capital, that makes the LDCs rather more subordinate to the ACCs than reduce their reliance".

On "reduced reliance", see above. "More subordinate"? I don't know. Certainly all the LDCs, from the most advanced to the poorest, still have a very subordinate relation to the big banks, multinationals, and richer capitalist states.

Ali's definition of revolutionary politics here seems to accept the broad left's (here: the nationalists') definition of the camps and the issues, but to differentiate by verbal intransigence and self-proclamation. More on this later.

Ali then proceeds to argue that my fundamental thesis in IB 49 is the development of capitalism in the Third World (LDCs). There's more to it than that: but for sure that development is a central fact. Then Ali continues:

"All these 'facts' are presented to prove that 'before World War 1, Rosa Luxemburg argued that the essence of imperialism was the relations between capitalist and non-capitalist economies'. 'Today the scene is completely changed'. It is the new era of capitalist development. Therefore the essence of imperialism is no longer in existence".

Maybe unclear writing by me is partly responsible for the amazing misunderstanding here. But I suspect that excessive factional zeal on Ali's part has more to do with it.

Rosa Luxemburg argued that an exclusively capitalist economy would rapidly break down: it could never consume as much as it produced. It therefore had to seek markets in non-capitalist areas: but in doing so it developed capitalist relations in those areas. The epoch before World War 1 reflected the sharpening competition between the big capitalist economies for the dwindling areas of pre-capitalist hinterland.

Other Marxists of the same period - notably Nikolai Bukharin - argued that Luxemburg was wrong in her theoretical reasoning. (And most Marxists today agree she was wrong). But, as I pointed out in IB 49, "In the polemic... no-one questioned her assumption that the LDCs were largely pre-capitalist". Today, by contrast, few Marxists would dispute that capitalist relations of production dominate in most LDCs. I used this contrast to underline the qualitative change since before World War 1 in the level of capitalist development in the LDCs.

I wasn't endorsing Rosa Luxemburg's theoretical definition of imperialism! I couldn't have been: according to Luxemburg's reasoning on this point, capitalism should have collapsed in irretrievable crisis long ago.

Then Ali questions my figures. For example: "if you concretise the comparison between India's 6% growth to the USA's 3%, you will come to figures of \$77.4 billion for the USA to 8.5 billion for India. How can these sort of figures represent a 'decreasing gap'? In fact it is almost 10 times more of an increased gap..."

This is not a very sensible way of interpreting figures. In 1965 the Gross Domestic Product of Japan was \$89 billion and the USA's GDP was \$687 billion. In 1982 Japan's GDP was \$1048 billion, the USA's \$3012 billion. In 1965 the gap was \$598 billion, in 1982 it was \$1964 billion. So the USA's lead over Japan is increasing? I would have thought that it was more sensible to look at the 11.8-fold increase in Japan's GDP, and the 4.4-fold increase in the USA's, and to conclude that the USA's lead is decreasing.

Likewise the USA's lead over the most advanced LDCs is decreasing, while its lead over the poorest LDCs is increasing. India, in fact, has grown at less than 6% per year: in the 1970s it was the slowest-growing (bar Argentina) of all the LDCs with any major manufacturing industry (IB 49, p.6).

"Another example is steel production... If you add up the total production, ACCs [advanced capitalist countries] have 61.1% of the world total steel production, the Stalinist states 34.2%, and LDCs a mere 4.8%. Again, how can these figures represent 'reduced reliance' on ACCs?"

Here I definitely must take part of the blame for Ali's confusion. There is a typing error on page 9 of IB 49, giving Western Europe 28% of world steel

But we have to see the picture as a whole. The massive debt expansion of the 1970s had at least three sides to it, not just one: increased dependence of certain LDCs on the commercial banks, but also accelerated industrialisation in those LDCs - and the emergence of other LDCs (the oil exporters) as major creditor nations, through a massive transfer of surplus value from the ACCs to them.

"[Kinnell] has to answer the question why it is that the 1900s development of [Western] capitalism has laid the basis for the end [should be 'rise'?] of social democracy... [while] almost every one of the LDCs [is] ruled by vicious dictatorships".

Here's the answer. In terms of numbers of factories, amount of energy consumed by industry, basic goods produced, etc., Latin America today is comparable to Western Europe in the early years of the 20th century. But: "This does not mean that Latin America is at the same point on the same path of capitalist development as Western Europe was in the early 20th century. It is at a different point on a different path" (IB 49, p.3).

The Latin American states today are relatively poor and weak states within world competition. Western Europe in the early 20th century was the strongest, richest part of the world.

Poverty is relative, and capitalist democracy depends on relative prosperity. That is the basic reason for there being so many dictatorships in Latin America (and elsewhere in the LDCs).

The reason given by Ali ("because of the subordinate character of this so-called 'industrialisation' ") is false. Dictatorships exist as much under economic-isolationist 'anti-imperialist' LDC regimes as in those LDCs fully integrated into the capitalist world market. Bourgeois democracy exists as much in countries like Canada, whose whole development has been dominated by foreign capital, as in other relatively wealthy countries. The repression is not imposed from outside. It derives fundamentally from the relations between the local ruling classes and the local working classes and peasantries.

"But it is no accident that Kinnell misses out the fundamental aspects of the phenomenon he argues. He takes the essence of imperialism as 'a relation between capitalist and non-capitalist countries' and justifies his positions accordingly..."

This is the Rosa Luxemburg bit again: see above.

Ali proceeds to cite Lenin and Trotsky. He continues: "And the post-war developments in LDCs have in no way created a new phenomenon where Marxists have to think about changing their fundamental theoretical standpoints.

"These developments took place within the imperialist framework and imperialists initiated and financed it and in return they increased their super-profits and their total economic and political control over these countries at the expense of greater misery and suffering for the toiling masses of these countries".

Ali seems to assume that the 'fundamental' feature of imperialism is the plunder and domination of the weak by the strong in the world economy. That certainly continues. It has continued for centuries. But Lenin's theory had something more precise to say about imperialism in his day. And Marxists today should have something more precise to say about imperialism in our day. Only by analysing the concrete class relations, the contradictions, the points where change is taking place, can we raise our politics above the level of a general outcry against injustice.

"Imperialists initiated and financed it [LDCs development]"? Usually not. Recent figures show external finance covering about 13% of LDCs investment. The LDC state has usually accounted for a much bigger share of investment. (See IB 49, p.13).

"They increased their super-profits"? Not so. ACCs' investment income from LDCs is very much less than it was before World War 1. In Britain, for example, before World War 1 net investment income from abroad was about 8.6% of national income (1910-13). Nearly half of that came from LDCs. By 1960-1 it was 1.2%, and less than a third of that from LDCs. The general picture for other ACCs is similar.

"They increased their total economic and political control". So all the victorious national liberation struggles were a waste of time? So Algeria is under increased political control by France now as compared to 1945? India under increased political control by Britain? Libya under increased political control by Italy?

"Formal political independence does not put an end to the demands and tasks of anti-imperialist struggles, but it merely transfers these tasks onto the proletariat and proletarian revolution.

"We cannot respond to the millions of anti-imperialist masses in LDCs by ignoring the fact that they exist. We cannot condemn millions of masses who find expression for their increased exploitation and misery in anti-imperialist demands; we can only respond by trying to give it a working class programme and an independent alternative".

There is a lot to disentangle here again. Despite his (mistaken) belief that I reject anti-imperialist struggle, Ali seems at first sight to be putting exactly the same argument as I put in IB 49 (p.22):

"To the millions of workers and peasants who today define themselves politically as 'anti-imperialist'... the task of Marxists is of course not to bring pedantic critiques but to try to show the way to a working-class programme".

We are anti-imperialist. Against political/military domination, we are for the democratic rights of nations and for national liberation struggle. Against the unequal economic relations of the capitalist world system, we are for international working-class socialist revolution. What we oppose is "the use of 'anti-imperialist' rhetoric to smear over class questions and to present bourgeois nationalism and proletarian socialism as simply more or less militant versions of the same 'anti-imperialism'." (IB 49, p.22).

We oppose subordination of working-class interests to the interests of the 'anti-imperialist camp', as in IB 7: "Whatever the implications of that for the Argentinian or British proletariat, we have to base our position on the implications for the international struggle against imperialism first. This means that even if a successful defence against Thatcher did strengthen Galtieri, we would still have to call on the Argentinian workers to undertake that defence... this is... a genuine struggle in which the real balance of forces between imperialism and the anti-imperialist masses is genuinely being tested". (IB 7, p.7, p.9).

Now Ali, too, insists on "a working-class programme and an independent alternative". Yet clearly he does not believe that he is arguing against IB 7 and on the same lines as IB 49. He believes he is arguing for the politics of IB 7, against IB 49. What is going on here?

Ali's argument, I think, is crucially moulded by having as a central article of faith the idea that no real political independence and no real bourgeois development is possible in the LDCs within the capitalist world system. ("Imperialists", remember, have "increased their total economic and political control over these countries"; industrialisation there is only "phoney".)

If you accept this basic idea, then you must conclude that any real development, any national self-assertion, is the socialist revolution, or at least the beginning of a "process of permanent revolution". This was one of the key arguments over the South Atlantic war: Galtieri's war should be supported because such an 'anti-imperialist' struggle was potentially the beginning of a process of permanent revolution. The same idea figures largely in a lot of left-wing thinking about Ireland: militant struggle for a united Ireland cannot but lead to socialist

revolution, and thus in passing solve the question of Catholic-Protestant working-class unity.

This issue is a good example of how dogmatic Trotskyist phrases can be combined with a content borrowed from non-proletarian left populism. Dogmatists argue: 'Trotsky said that the historic tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution could not be carried out in the underdeveloped countries short of the socialist revolution' - ignoring the fact that Trotsky was writing to try to give direction to revolutionary struggles in the short term, not speculating about what might happen if world capitalism survived for another 50 years. (See IB 49, p.31). Left populists try to slot the class struggles of today into the ideological framework of the anti-colonial struggles of yesterday. Some of them are motivated by more-or-less naive disappointment at the limited fruits of those anti-colonial struggles; others are more cynically concerned to smother class struggle by fostering national unity against a foreign enemy. (IB 49, p.28-30).

The ideology created by combining these ideas can lead either to opportunist political conclusions (petty bourgeois nationalists being seen as opening the socialist revolution, etc.), or to sectarian conclusions (political independence being seen as irrelevant, etc.); but the basic idea is the same in each case.

There are certainly bourgeois-democratic issues still to be fought out in the LDCs. My argument in IB 49 is that the working class must maintain its own independent outlook on all these issues; that it must critically examine every slogan which the bourgeoisie puts forward in the name of national liberation (e.g. conquest of the Falklands), to see whether it is really a slogan of national liberation or simply of national-bourgeois self-promotion; and that it must remember that 'the main enemy is at home' - the main enemy is the ruling local bourgeoisie, and imperialism can be fought only through fighting that bourgeoisie.

Ali and his co-thinkers have argued, in contrast, that there is no real bourgeoisie, only a 'phoney', shadow bourgeoisie, even in the most advanced LDCs. So in the LDCs it is untrue that "the main enemy is at home" (see my article in IB 12, p.5, and Smith in IB 13, p.15; on 'tenuous' Argentine bourgeoisie, IB 10 p.5).

The local bourgeoisie appears in their thinking as a lightweight object tossed between the two fundamental camps in the 'international balance of forces', i.e. 'imperialism' and 'the masses'. The fundamental struggle is between 'imperialism' and 'the masses', and by definition that is the socialist revolution. It is not that the comrades consciously see world bloc politics ('the international balance of forces') as more important than working-class struggle; it is that they identify that 'international balance of forces' as being the essence of the socialist revolution, and local working-class interests as being details in comparison.

That is why they could write: "Whatever the implications of that for the proletariat, we have to base our position on the implications for the international struggle against imperialism first [in a] genuine struggle in which the real balance of forces between imperialism and the anti-imperialist masses is being tested" (IB 7).

It is also why they are not very good at assessing the "international balance of forces"! Instead of the real, specific forces at play, they operate in terms of cloudy abstractions ('the imperialists' in general, 'the masses' in general).

To support his argument that formal political independence does not substantially change the terms and issues of struggle in the LDCs, Ali also quotes Trotsky: "The exploitation of classes was supplemented and its potency increased by the exploitation of nations".

In using this quotation, Ali is once again veering away from concrete analysis of capitalist development today in favour of bland historical generalisations

spanning centuries - and thus implicitly adopting a populist, non-Marxist definition of the camps and the issues of struggle.

In the sentence quoted, Trotsky was referring to the mercantilist imperialism of the 16th-18th centuries, not the capital-export imperialism of later epochs. This is made clear from the countries he cites as examples in the previous sentence: "The fortunes of Spain, Holland, England, France were obtained not only from the surplus labour of their own proletariat, not only by devastating their own petty bourgeoisie, but also through the systematic pillage of their overseas possessions".

Now there are features in common between 16th/18th century Spanish pillage of South America, and modern US imperialism in the region. Both the Spanish conquistadores working the local people to death at sword-point in the silver mines, and the US bankers, quietly going through figures in their air-conditioned offices, have plundered the people.

But on the same level of generality, 16th century Europe is similar to modern capitalist Europe. In both a small minority lives off the toil of the majority.

But both in South America, and in Europe, the precise economic mechanisms, political forms, and class relations have changed seriously between the 16th century and now. Unless we analyse those changes, our political conclusions will not be geared to the concrete class relations, but only to a bland, abstract nationalist populism - a general expression of sympathy with the 'people' against the exploiters. It's as if, in Europe, we were still to accept the camps and issues defined by the French Revolution of 1789-99, and to set our aim as a struggle by the 'people' to win 'Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity'. Adding a sentence to the end of our proclamations: 'The reformists betray, and these aims can only be won under the leadership of a Trotskyist party', would be no substitute for a proper revised definition of the camps and the issues.

There is also an implication here that the bourgeoisie of LDCs is to be considered in some way an exploited or oppressed class. This isn't explicit in Ali's article, but it is in some other writings of the faction. E.g. a letter from ed. Hotchkiss to the paper: "The whole of Argentina, both capitalists and workers, are the victims of the big banks".

Here it is useful to quote Trotsky. Under colonial imperialism, of course, the bourgeoisies of LDCs were victims of the common national oppression in the same way (and with the same qualifications) that Asian capitalists in Britain are victims of racism, or women capitalists victims of sexism. Moreover, in many LDCs in that period, the bourgeoisie was not the dominant class internally, but was subordinated to other exploiting classes of a pre-capitalist type.

Despite all that, and even while he still saw the coming revolution in countries like China as bourgeois, not socialist, Trotsky stressed that there was no common 'anti-imperialist front' between workers and capitalists.

"China is an oppressed semi-colonial country... But this by no means signifies that the imperialist yoke is a mechanical one, subjugating 'all' the classes of China in the 'same' way... It is a gross mistake to think that imperialism mechanically welds together all the classes of China from without... The class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the masses of workers and peasants is not weakened, but, on the contrary, it is sharpened by imperialist oppression..." (The Chinese Revolution and The Theses of Comrade Stalin).

In most LDCs today, the bourgeoisie is the ruling class. It is not 'oppressed' by imperialism except in the sense that small capital is 'oppressed' by big capital everywhere. To look on LDC bourgeoisies with some sympathy because of that 'oppression' is as sensible as being sympathetic to small sweatshop capitalists because they are suffering in competition with big corporations.

Ali cites the example of IMF intervention in Turkey and the response: "it should not be the IMF delegations but us, workers, peasants, studying those books".

Excellent response! It's a good example of how to put the fight against the IMF on a class, rather than nationalist, footing. I have no disagreements with Ali on this.

But often leftists do put the fight against the IMF on a nationalist footing. A vivid example is the contrast between the class response of the Workers' Party (PT) in Brazil to the IMF intervention there, and the nationalist response of the Morenist 'Movement Towards Socialism' (MAS) to IMF intervention in Argentina.

The PT, according to reports I have read, argues (as well as calling for the cancellation of the debt): "If the Brazilian bourgeoisie wants to make a deal with the IMF, then let them pay for it themselves. The workers won't pay!"

The MAS calls for Argentina to repudiate its foreign debts, not as a subsidiary part of an international socialist programme, but as a single-issue leading demand as a means to achieve "national sovereignty" and the "Second Independence" of Argentina.

This is nationalist demagoguery. Repudiation of the foreign debt by a bourgeois government - which is not inconceivable - would not ensure economic "sovereignty" but thrust Argentina into economic isolationism. The MAS's agitation only diverts workers from the necessary internationalist outlook; blurs the fact that there is no single-country Argentine solution, outside a struggle for a Socialist United States of South and Central America; and prepares the way for class-collaboration if a bourgeois government should follow such an economic-isolationist course.

Again, denunciations of other political forces and proclamations that only a revolutionary party can win the stated aims do not help matters much.

Ali's argument scatters into a series of assertions: that I support self-determination for the Protestants in Ireland, that I believe there are no more anti-imperialist struggles in the Third World, that my view is that: "National liberation struggles have no validity in the imperialist world but only become progressive against workers' states".

It's a terrible fact that in the current disputes even the wildest accusations against the EEC majority seem to get a hearing. In the EEC debate at the summer school, comrade Smith denounced me for allegedly saying that Kinnoch's shift of position on the EEC was progressive (and for allegedly holding to an EEC-parliamentary road to socialism!) Comrade Stanford came into the debate shortly afterwards, and spoke generally along the same lines as I had done on the EEC. He made a point of saying that he disagreed with my (supposed) view that Kinnoch was taking a progressive stand!

Yet I had written two articles in the paper for all to read on Kinnoch's shift of position, describing it as cynical and in no way internationalist.

Similarly, in the South Atlantic war debate comrade Traven felt bound to state that he disagreed with some of the theoretical arguments of the majority (IB 12). I asked him what he meant. It turned out that he believed the accusations that we were saying that imperialism was progressive!

I don't think there is much I can do for comrades who still believe that we see imperialism as progressive, are against national liberation, support a Protestant state in Ireland, oppose British withdrawal from Ireland, or whatever. If we did hold any of those views (and there are serious socialists who do hold them), we would state them and expect an intelligent response - not these denunciations in the tone of a priest exposing notorious heretics to the pious horror of the faithful.

Ali's method of argument here can only serve to play on the fears of those

made insecure and confused by the factional arguments, and to stampede them back towards the reputedly safe ground of 'average Trotskyism'.

There are a couple of points in the last page of Ali's article which do, however, deserve specific comment.

He quotes a passage from IB 49 correctly: "This argument goes through to the definition of certain people as 'pro-imperialist' and therefore not deserving of self-determination (or autonomy as appropriate) or rights as against an oppressor power which can be defined as 'anti-imperialist'. Examples are the Northern Ireland Protestants, the Falklanders, the Afghans..." (see IB 49, p.24).

At the August conference he quoted this same passage, deleting the phrase "(or autonomy as appropriate)". He triumphantly concluded that we were "really" advocating self-determination for the Northern Ireland Protestants! In IB 71 the quote is in full... but the conclusion is the same.

This last page also contains a revealing sentence, condemning me for believing that "there is no room for the demands for the right of self-determination ('the right to form independent states') even for the Palestinians or Catholics in Ireland 'alone'."

If Ali means what he writes, he is advocating an exclusively-Arab state in Palestine and an exclusively-Catholic state in Ireland. The Palestinians and the Catholics should have "the right to form independent states", "alone". They may then, of course, choose to grant individual rights to individual Jews, or Protestants. But the Israeli Jewish nation, or the Northern Ireland Protestant community, have no more collective rights in the matter than the Eskimos or New Zealanders.

I think this is not really what Ali means to say. I don't think he would stick by the idea that there is a Catholic 'nation' in Ireland as opposed to a single Irish nation embracing Catholics and Protestants.

But the mistaken formulation flows logically from the whole "balance-of-forces-between-imperialism-and-the-masses" way of viewing the world. The Catholics, for example, are part of 'the masses'; the Protestants are in the camp of 'imperialism'. The most thorough, ruthless victory for the masses is, by definition, the socialist revolution. And what about the Protestants? The socialist revolution will satisfy their concerns, because socialism means equality for all. In the meantime, to fuss about the concerns of the Protestants is simply to aid 'imperialism' against 'the masses'.

Here again are the same issues. The camp of the revolution is identified with the 'anti-imperialist masses' - a motley coalition of the working class with Stalinists, nationalist bourgeoisies or petty bourgeoisies, etc. The issue is identified in the terms set by the 'broad left' (in this case the populists and nationalists): victory for the 'anti-imperialist masses' over 'imperialism'. Ali differentiates from the non-Marxist left, not by criticising its fundamental aims and concepts, but by ultra-intransigence - which would be expressed in day-to-day terms as loud denunciations of other political forces for betraying, and proclamations that only the Trotskyist party can bring victory.

There is a fundamental similarity, I think, with the debate on the Labour Party. There once again the faction comrades seemed to see the specific irreplaceable role of the Leninist organisation not so much in terms of developing and promoting a different basic vision from the broad left, but rather in terms of the labels and trappings of a 'revolutionary party'. No wonder they get angry and confused: both when the majority criticise the most basic ideas of the broad left, and when we try to relate to that broad left through dialogue rather than denunciations and self-proclamations, we appear to be slipping away from the bedrock essentials of revolutionary politics.

Ali states that he is defending "the principles of revolutionary Marxism" against "a fundamental revision" by me. But what he is in fact defending is a

sort of 'anti-imperialist-camp' politics - compounded from dogmatic interpretation of Trotskyist phrases, and unconscious borrowing from non-Trotskyist radical theories - against a striving for Marxist realism, concrete analysis, and independent working class politics.

NOTES

PAGE 6: Figures on net investment income from M. Barratt Brown, 'After Imperialism', p.108-9 and p.xv. See also J.H.Dunning 'International Investment', p.80; and Angus Maddison in C.M.Cipolla (ed.), 'The Fontana Economic History of Europe', Vol 5:2, p.442:

"In the UK, income from abroad added 10% to domestic product in 1913 and a negligible amount in 1970. French income from abroad probably added about 7% to GDP in 1913 and was negligible in 1970. Germany's foreign income added 2.4% to domestically produced resources in 1913, but in 1970 Germany was making payments to others".

A "negligible" percentage of national income may of course be an extremely important part of the income of important capitalist groups within the nation. Also, the flow may not be "negligible" at all in relation to the nation it is flowing from. But these are different issues.

PAGE 4: Growth of industry in the LDCs. Some figures for the growing LDC share in world exports of certain manufactured goods may also serve to illustrate the fact of change. The figures exclude Taiwan and therefore must underestimate the LDC shares slightly. Equally, however, they should not be exaggerated: in many, perhaps most, lines of manufacture, the LDC share of world exports is still practically nil.

Share of LDCs in capitalist world exports

	1960	1970	1979	
Machinery and equipment (SITC 7)	0.90%	1.84%	5.51%	(Source: UN Monthly Bulletin of Statistics, July 1981. SITC: Standard International Trade Classification).
All manufactures (SITC 5+6+7+8)	6.39%	7.22%	10.41%	

		1971	1979	
Civil engineering equipment (SITC 723)		n.a.	4.4%	
Food processing machinery (SITC 727)		n.a.	11%	
Metal-working machine tools (SITC 736)		n.a.	3.2%	
Office machines (SITC 751)		n.a.	8.2%	
Parts and accessories for office and data-processing machinery (SITC 759)		0.8%	6.6%	
TV receivers (SITC 761)		5%	20%	
Radio receivers (SITC 762)		13%	35%	
Sound recorders &c (SITC 763)		1%	7%	
Telecom equipment (SITC 764)		1%	10%	

(Share of LDCs in capitalist world exports, continued)

	1971	1979
Switchgear etc. (SITC 772)	2%	6%
Transistors, valves, etc. (SITC 776)	8%	34%
Passenger motor vehicles excl. buses (SITC 781)	n.a.	1%
Lorries etc. (SITC 782)	n.a.	2.7%
Other road motor vehicles (SITC 783)	6%	5%
Cycles etc. (SITC 785)	1%	8%
Railway vehicles (SITC 791)	1%	5%
Ships & boats (SITC 793)	1%	11%
Outerwear, non-knitted (SITC 842 and 843)	21%	37%

(Source: UN Handbook of
Int'l Trade Statistics)

Where n.a. is entered, in every case the 1971 percentage was tiny.

In IB 67 Scott argues, on the basis of the rise of manufacturing in the LDCs and the development of new technology, that the trend is towards an international division of labour in which the only jobs in the ACCs would be jobs like "computer programmers, analysts, etc" and in services (finance, health, education, etc.) Presumably the bulk of manufacturing industry jobs would be in the LDCs. The international income of the ACCs would be profits, interest, and royalties on technology, rather than receipts on manufactured goods. (IB 67, p. 7 and p.17-18).

I think this is wrong. The reasons, very briefly, are as follows:

1. The ACCs' domination in manufacturing industry - and even in such basic branches of economic activity as food production - is still tremendous. Even if all the trends which Scott identifies were to continue as rapidly as in the 1970s, it would take well into the 21st century for anything like the picture he paints to emerge. To extrapolate trends that far is unsound: all such trends are relative to a given basic social/international framework, and it is unscientific to suppose that the basic framework could continue unchanged through such a process. (The extrapolation is almost as unsound as the attempt by some faction comrades to get a picture of world capitalism today by extrapolating Trotsky's judgments for 45 or 50 years ago).

2. Although elsewhere in his document Scott does stress the differentiation among the LDCs, in the argument we are concerned with here he proceeds as if the ACCs and LDCs could be considered as homogeneous blocs. In truth a much more likely medium-term development is a realignment of world capitalist power relations: the rise of new imperialisms, the eclipse of old ones.

3. New technology does not lead just to highly-skilled technical jobs. New technology does create new skilled jobs, but it also de-skills or destroys old skilled jobs.

Once transport costs have been sufficiently reduced, and infrastructure has been developed sufficiently in certain LDCs, there is an obvious advantage for capitalists in siting basic production in those LDCs. That creates a tendency for basic manufacturing labour to be sited in LDCs, and technical/service labour in ACCs. But there are plenty of counter-tendencies.

New technology de-skills work in ACCs. Capitalist development creates conditions for more skilled technical work to be concentrated in LDCs. (Singapore,

and for that matter Argentina, do after all have a higher proportion of young people getting higher education than Britain has).

All other things being equal, ACCs, with their better markets and infrastructure, will be preferred sites for new large-scale manufacturing industries. And so long as capitalism develops, it will continue to create new large-scale manufacturing industries. One of the major features of industrialisation in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South Korea is that a very large proportion of it - in textiles, clothing, electronics, etc. - consists of very small factories with small-scale machinery.

And if an ACC should get anywhere near the point where basic manufacturing jobs in it were disappearing, then wage levels there would inevitably be forced down, and it would become a competitor with newly-industrialising LDCs as a cheap labour site.

4. As noted above, the ACCs' income from profits and interest overseas has generally declined as a proportion of their national income since World War 1. The proportion may have increased again over the 1970s with the huge growth of international bank lending, but to bring it back up again to the levels of 1913 would require a major change in world economic relations.

Kinnell. 22.11.83.

 POSTSCRIPT: The Argentine left on the elections

The extracts on the next page (reproduced from Intercontinental Press) may help illustrate some of the arguments about the 'anti-imperialist united front' (see resolution on Central America in WSR2; article by me on 'Permanent Revolution' in IB8; first draft of that Central America resolution in IB 11).

Prensa Obrera is the paper of the 'Workers Party', a broad party supported by the Trotskyist (Fourth Internationalist Tendency) group Poltica Obrera. Solidaridad Socialista is the paper of the 'Movement Towards Socialism', a broad movement supported by the Trotskyist (Morenist) group PST.

Both papers are of course trying to gain the hearing of a working class deeply dominated by Peronist nationalism. They have to adapt their language and style to that task. But I think it is clear that Solidaridad Socialista is not merely adapting its language, but allowing the content of working class politics to be displaced by nationalism.

PO is a more complex case. It is clear from the extract that they see the 'anti-imperialist front' not as an alliance for specific actions, but as a long-term political bloc, including a common front at elections.

The 'Intransigent' party is a left splinter from the Radicals, with a social democratic political coloration.

Notable in the extract, I think, is the overwhelming priority given to nationalist issues. The fight for democratic rights gets remarkably little concrete attention. It is likewise in the 12-point Action Programme carried by PO: 1. Minimum wage; 2. General 100% wage rise; 3. Restoration of the 'disappeared' and of sacked workers; 4. Against speculation and waste, workers control of production; 5. Suspension of the payment of the external debt, investigation of it; 6. Full satisfaction of the demands of the Mothers and Relatives (of the 'disappeared'); 7. Repudiation of all treaties which infringe on national sovereignty over the whole territory including the continental shelf; 8. Freedom of trade union and political organisation; 9. Down with the military dictatorship, liquidation of militarism, immediate elections; 10. For a government of the workers and the working people.

There's a reason for this, and it's not tactical. When I discussed with FIT comrades in France this summer, they told me: "The bourgeoisie is obliged to open a constitutional interlude. But no sector of the bourgeoisie has a nationalist programme on the economic questions. Therefore there is no possibility of concessions, and a new coup d'etat is certain". I.e. the question of democracy within Argentina is seen as a sort of sub-section of the nationalist issues.

The drift of PO's position is thus to defocus the class struggle in Argentina onto a vaguely-conceived external enemy, and to compromise with middle class nationalism.

SELECTIONS FROM THE LEFT

Prensa obrera

"Workers Press", weekly newspaper of the Partido Obrero (PO — Workers Party) of Argentina. Published in Buenos Aires.

Issue No. 24 of *Prensa Obrera*, dated July 14, carried the text of an open letter from PO leaders addressed to the Intransigent Party, the Communist Party, the left-wing Peronist current known as Intransigence and Mobilization, the Movement Toward Socialism, and other left groups. The open letter said, in part:

"The membership drives, public meetings, democratic mobilizations and demonstrations, and workers and people's struggles have shown that the Argentine left has become a weighty force with more and more of a mass character. All together, the left has achieved more than 500,000 registered supporters, and has been able to bring out some 150,000 persons to its official rallies in the capital and greater Buenos Aires. . . .

"The most important thing, however, is the fact that the left in this country has a programmatic stance that clearly differentiates it from all of the traditional forces. While the latter propose compromises with imperialism, with the International Monetary Fund, and with the international banks, all the forces of the left call for the nationalization of the banks and of foreign trade, as well as the investigation of fraudulent indebtedness, before complying with payments on the foreign debt. While the traditional forces want to reach some kind of agreement with U.S. and British imperialism putting off indefinitely the question of sovereignty over the Malvinas, the left has called for struggle at all levels against the usurpations of imperialism. While the parties of big capital . . . have not taken up the national demands of the mothers and relatives [of the "disappeared"], the left has been in the streets on various occasions shouting those demands. Only the left has spoken out against the Yankee aggression against Nicaragua in a real and not a hypocritical way."

The PO's letter drew the conclusion from this that a basis existed for forming "an anti-imperialist front, taking advantage of the coming elections but giving it the character not of an episodic electoral apparatus but rather of a movement of political mobilization."

The letter further stated that in the PO's view, "the anti-imperialist front is not a single-class front but rather one that includes the various oppressed classes, in the first place the proletariat and the various layers of the petty bourgeoisie. . . . In our view the anti-imperialist front must be distinguished by its political function as the leadership of a great national uprising against imperialism, that is, as a factor of independent mobilization of all the exploited."

Subsequent issues of *Prensa Obrera* published large numbers of statements from individual working-class militants and activists in the struggle for democratic rights lending support to the PO's proposal. Nonetheless, an article in the August 12 issue reported that "the majority of the parties of the left have accelerated their decisions and efforts in favor of a front with Peronism, more precisely, of unconditional support for the Peronist candidates." Therefore, supporters of the PO were called upon to continue efforts to form anti-imperialist fronts at the local level or to include supporters of that perspective on the slates of candidates that would be presented under the name of the PO on the October 30 ballot.

The August 26 issue of *Prensa Obrera* announced the PO's candidates for president and vice-president: Gregorio Flores, a leader of the militant SITRAC-SITRAM auto workers union at the Fiat Concord plant in Córdoba in the late 1960s; and Catalina Raimundo de Guagnini, a longtime activist in the struggles of teachers and educators and a member of the National Secretariat of Relatives of the Detained and Disappeared.

"The choice is clear," the PO's paper said in presenting these candidates. "Either national collapse under bourgeois leadership, or national emancipation and socialism under the leadership of the proletariat. . . .

"Along these lines, [the PO] calls for the election throughout the country of worker and activist candidates, whether affiliated to the PO or not, so long as they commit themselves to a class-struggle platform."



"Socialist Solidarity," weekly newspaper that supports the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) of Argentina. Published in Buenos Aires.

Issue No. 32 of *Solidaridad Socialista*, dated July 7, carried reports and photographs of a public rally of some 15,000 persons held by the MAS at Luna Park, a sports auditorium in Buenos Aires, on July 1. One article stated, "It is no accident that, for the first time since its launching in September 1982, the MAS has received broad coverage in the daily press, on the radio, and even on television. To have filled Luna Park places the MAS among the political parties with a real presence at the national level.

"In particular, it establishes the MAS as one of the three big forces of the Argentine left. The MAS rally had a slightly smaller attendance than the one held by the Communist Party in the same auditorium, and surpassed the one held a week before by the Intransigent Party."

The MAS rally had two main themes, the paper said: "the suspension of foreign debt payments, as the necessary condition for the Second Independence of our country and Latin America; and the need to put forward a socialist alternative to the range of bosses' candidates being presented in the electoral process. . . .

"The speeches by the orators, as well as in the chants and slogans from the platform, reflected the great objective summed up in the phrase carried on the big red banner of the MAS above the stage: 'For a socialist Argentina without generals or capitalists.'"

The September 8 *Solidaridad Socialista* reported on the holding of the MAS's constituent congress in Buenos Aires on September 4, which the paper said was attended by 94 delegates from all provinces of the country and by some 3,000 invited observers.

The congress nominated as MAS candidates for president and vice-president Luis Zamora, a lawyer who has defended political prisoners, and Silvia Díaz, a socialist student leader in the 1960s who was jailed and exiled by the dictatorship.

A supplement to the September 8 *Solidaridad Socialista* carried the MAS's election platform, which centered on the demand that Argentina's huge foreign debt be repudiated. "If the parties that come to power are not ready to confront imperialism and stop paying back the debt," the MAS said, "the country and the people will be ruined so that the imperialist bankers can get fat. So before voting, ask yourself, is the party or candidate I prefer in favor of or against paying the foreign debt? The MAS opposes doing so and calls for a struggle to defend the country and the people from this imperialist aggression. We call for a workers and people's mobilization for not paying the foreign debt."

Another section of the platform tied the question of the debt to revolution in Latin America, drawing a parallel to the united struggles of the peoples of the continent against Spanish colonialism in the early 1800s:

"Today, in 1983, we barely remain a nation, because we are exploited and colonized by Yankee imperialism. The time has come to make another great revolution together with our Latin American brothers and sisters to conquer our Second Independence! . . .

"At this moment, the sharpest battle of this Latin American revolution is being waged in Central America, above all in El Salvador and Nicaragua. . . .

"The outcome of this battle is very important for us, even though it is occurring thousands of kilometers away. San Martín and Bolívar also fought thousands of kilometers apart, but one day they embraced each other in the center of the continent. If our Central American brothers and sisters defeat the Yan-

If we examine the positions of Carolan on Ireland more closely and try to find answers to questions such as 'why a reformist negotiated solution to the Irish struggle?', 'what are the links between these positions and other such as Palestine where the same reformist, negotiated solutions have been advanced by Carolan, by not recognising Palestinians' rights for self-determination, hence giving Zionists the right for a veto, the same as protestants in Ireland', we have to examine the world view he presented with Kinnell during the Malvinas discussions in IB 49.

It is not the purpose of this article to reply to IB 49, but to draw from it the necessary conclusions which are relevant to the present discussions on 'federalism'.

Post-War Imperialism and LDCs

Kinnell set out to prove the conclusions he posed in IB 49 as 'Is this a new era of capitalist development? Yes.' (p.35). In his view, the situation in the world economy has changed so fundamentally that Lenin's theses on imperialism can only be a "reference point for us today". (p.35)

A number of developments in post-war economies are outlined to prove that hypothesis; but the arguments are fundamentally based on the developments within backward capitalist countries (LDCs).

LDCs in the post-war period had "large-scale industrial capitalism"; "most 3rd world countries have begun to develop their own manufacturing industry"; a "few LDCs have become sizeable manufacturing countries and have begun to export manufactured goods on a large scale"; "'the gap' between the most advanced LDCs and ACCs (advanced capitalist countries) is decreasing". In his view these developments are so great that "Latin America now is at a level of capitalist development comparable to Western Europe in the first half of this century". Some of these countries have a 6% per year rate of industrial growth "far exceeded the USA growth of about 3% per year".

All these 'facts' are presented to prove that "before WWI, Rosa Luxemburg argued that the essence of imperialism was the relations between capitalist and non-capitalist economies". "Today the scene is completely changed" (p.5). It is the new era of capitalist development. Therefore the essence of imperialism is no longer in existence.

There are a great number of problems with this line of arguments. Firstly, the figures outlined have to be examined differently. For example if you concretise the comparison between India's 6% growth to USA's 3%, you will come to figures of \$ 77.4 billion for the USA to 8.5 billion for India. How can these sort of figures represent a "decreasing gap"? in fact it is almost 10 times more of an increased gap than a decrease.

Another example on steel production in page 9 - If you add up the total productions, ACCs have 61.1% of the world total steel production, the socialist states 34.2% and LDCs a mere 4.8%. Again, how can these figures represent "reduced reliance" on ACCs? These examples can be increased. Kinnell makes these figures talk in his documents but in a manipulative way, in a way that he wants them to talk to prove his conclusions.

But more importantly, he misses out the fundamental character of post-war industrialisation in the LDCs. That it has been done through borrowing. It is common knowledge that if even only Brazil or Mexico were declared bankrupt, the international banking system would face a massive crisis.

It is this very character of LDCs' development, i.e. massive borrowing from finance capital that makes the LDCs rather more subordinate to the ACCs than reduce their reliance.

So Kinnell's comparison of these developments with that of Western capitalism in 1900 falls flat.

He has to answer the question why is it that the 1900s development of capitalism has laid the basis for the end of social democracy, a new set of

class relations based on concessions and collaboration of classes, and contrary to that, in almost every one of the LDCs ruled by vicious dictatorships.

That is because of the subordinate character of this so-called 'industrialisation', because of it being phoney, not developing from the organic process but being injected from outside.

Of course the real gains made from this post-war LDCs developments were not by the LDCs themselves but by international finance capital; and every one of these LDCs become more and more controlled by imperialism and its finance institutions.

But it is no accident that Kinnell misses out the fundamental aspects of the phenomenon he argues.

He takes the essence of imperialism as "a relation between capitalist and non-capitalist countries" and justifies his positions accordingly.

Contrary to Kinnell, Trotsky argues "...in contemporary literature, at least marxist literature, imperialism is understood to mean the expansionist policy of finance capital which has a very sharp defined economic content." (Trotsky In defense of marxism, pp. 33-39).

Again, for Lenin, "Imperialism is monopolistic capitalism. A handful of rich countries.... have developed monopoly in vast proportions, they obtain super-profits... they 'ride on the backs' of hundreds and hundreds of million of foreign populations and they fight among each other for the division of particularly rich, particularly fat and particularly easy spoils. This is the economic and political essence of imperialism". (Lenine, Collected Works, xix)

And post-war developments in LDCs have in no way created a new phenomenon where marxists have to think about changing their fundamental theoretical standpoints.

These developments took place within the imperialist framework and imperialists initiated and financed it and in return they increased their super-profits and their total economic and political control over these countries at the expense of greater misery and suffering for the toiling masses of these countries.

What is the link between Ireland and discussions on post-war imperialism?

The political conclusions behind Kinnell's arguments on LDCs is to argue against "anti-imperialism" in LDCs. In his mind, formal political independence and economic developments (reduced reliance, increased gaps, etc.) in LDCs in the post-war period put an end to any anti-imperialist struggle.

This is in my view a legitimate but wrong argument. I hold the view that anti-imperialist struggles in LDCs have not finished, neither objectively nor subjectively in the minds of the masses. "The exploitation of classes was supplemented and its potency increased by the exploitations of nations". (Trotsky, Marxism in our time).

When Lenin says in April 1917 that bourgeois revolution is finished now the proletariat must take power, he did not mean that the tasks of bourgeois revolution have been finished and completed. He meant that revolution put the bourgeoisie in power but they cannot complete the tasks of their own revolution. Similarly, formal political independence in LDCs does not complete anti-imperialist and democratic tasks, only proletarian revolution can achieve these tasks, the agrarian revolution, etc.

Therefore, formal political independence does not put an end to the demands and tasks of anti-imperialist struggles, but it merely transfers these tasks onto the proletariat and proletarian revolution.

We cannot respond to the millions of anti-imperialist masses in LDCs by ignoring the fact that they exist. We cannot condemn millions of masses who find expression for their increased exploitation and misery in anti-imperialist demands; we can only respond to it by trying to give it a working class programme and an independent alternative.

For example, when the IMF delegation visited Turkey in 1979-80 and spent two weeks to study the Government's 'books' to draw austerity plans and when some bourgeois politicians marched and protested against the fact that foreigners were deciding "what we have to do" and got responses from the masses,

we argued yes, it should not be the IMF delegation but us workers, peasants studying these books; they should open them to the masses.

Therefore, our answers are not ignoring anti-imperialist dynamics and demands of the class struggle in LDCs but giving it an independent working class perspective.

But Kinnell does not stop his condemnation of anti-imperialism in relation to LDCs. He establishes the political links with these arguments (which we had in relation to the Malvinas war) and extends them in relation to Afghanistan/Palestine and Ireland.

"They see the negative formula 'defeat of British imperialism' as more revolutionary than the proposal for a democratic solution in Ireland.

"This argument goes through to the definition of certain people as 'pro-imperialist', and therefore not deserving of self-determination (or autonomy as appropriate) or rights as against an oppressor power which can be defined as 'anti-imperialist'. Examples are the Northern Ireland protestants, the Falklanders, the Afghans.

"The marxist attitude to the national question is surely to fight to solve it in the most democratic manner possible, to leave as little room as possible for national conflict..." (IB 49, p.24)

Of course the logic of these arguments in the present discussion on Ireland and federalism is crystal clear:

- (1) right of self-determination for the protestant in Ireland.
- (2) federalism is the most democratic solution possible in Ireland.
- (3) defeat of British imperialism by the republicans is no more revolutionary than this solution. In fact this solution is much more consistent with marxism than the defeat of British imperialism.

Jones' articles took up these arguments in detail so I am not going to spend time examining these views.

But what comrades have to know is that in the present discussion what we are dealing with is a complete scenario of world view of imperialism and its relations with the rest of the world.

Kinnell and Carolan believe that we are living in a new era of capitalist developments. Within that there is no more progressive anti-imperialist struggles. Within the imperialist world there is no room for the demands for the right of self-determination ('the right to form independent states') even for the Palestinians or catholics in Ireland 'alone'. National unification of Ireland and achieving it through defeating British imperialism in revolutionary struggle is fantasy.

In their views, the right of self-determination only applies to the stalinist states where they categorically stated that "But by far the greatest oppressor of nations today is the USSR" (IB 49, p.22)

National liberation struggles have no validity in the imperialist world but only become progressive against workers' states.

For them the right of self-determination applies for Zionists in Palestine, protestants in Ireland and a handful of British in the Malvinas; thus reducing this marxist conception into liberal defence of the rights of individuals or group of individuals or communities.

In our part the right of self-determination applies only to the oppressed nations; furthermore it can only mean to form a separate, independent state.

We therefore reject the so-called democratic solution, i.e. federalism in Ireland, and are in favour of a struggle for a united Ireland, as part of the struggle for a united socialist Ireland.

What is at stake in this discussion, is a fundamental revision of marxism on the question of imperialism and on the right of self-determination. We, therefore, call on all members to reject these revisions and remain within the principles of revolutionary marxism and stand by it.

On our international work.

- Cunliffe

Summary: Where do we stand at present?

After its ignominious collapse in April 1983, the fiction of a "continuity of TILC" cannot be sustained either by the WSL/LOB/TAF sectarians, or by the WSL/SP/PTT comrades who in practice stood by the founding principles of TILC. As a body with any significance (however limited) TILC is now decisively dead, and the conditions in which it was appropriate to launch it in 1979 have to a large extent changed (though the need for an international tendency that will conduct a programmatic fight for the political and organisational regeneration of the FI is of course in no way diminished).

Our future international work is therefore at the crossroads. There are four obvious alternative lines of approach to the problem. In my view three of them are completely unacceptable or impracticable.

1) We could forge ahead regardless, and set up ~~as a~~ a "mini-TILC", as an organised structure more or less openly depicting itself as the continuity of TILC. This body would - given recent events - be composed of three components: the WSL; those (SP) who with insignificant differences agree completely with the WSL majority leadership; and those (the PTT) who would be prepared to subordinate their differences with the WSL majority sooner than lose an international affiliation.

In favour of such a notion is the fact that it would not "hand TILC to the sectarians", and retain our claims on its name, texts and record; and also the fact that it would retain links with the Australians and American comrades. It is of course important to work with SP and the PTT. But a mini-TILC is the most sectarian way imaginable of doing so; it would be universally (and *in part*) correctly seen and portrayed as simply a satellite grouping of those prepared to accept the WSL majority line. As such it would become a profoundly negative factor amongst any potentially sympathetic forces we might otherwise expect to reach; it would be incapable of attracting fresh forces or of conducting any serious interventions. While masquerading as international work, this is in effect a course that would mean renunciation of serious international initiatives, and in my view discredit the WSL irreparably on a world scale.

2) Also wrong, but less damaging, would be simply to pull back from international work for an extended period while we discuss internally on our attitude to the world movement and await a more favourable conjuncture for some renewed initiative. This overtly "national Trotskyist" course at least does not pretend to be anything else. But having thus retreated from any international initiatives, it is highly doubtful if any worthwhile discussions would ever actually occur inside the WSL; the incentive to tackle programmatic and theoretical problems would diminish, and it seems unlikely the WSL could ~~ever~~ pull out of such an introspective nosedive.

3) A third false conclusion would be to look for immediate fusion into one of the larger existing groupings - the Marxist LIT or, more likely, the USFI, on the grounds that we have "no choice", and must be in some international grouping.

The obvious organisational obstacles to this - the existence of the Socialist League as a larger grouping in Britain holding the USFI franchise; and an alien political method; and the virtual confinement of Moreno's LIT to Latin America - should not blind us to the political limitation of such a course, which effectively amounts to renouncing our long-held objective of fighting for a serious and thoroughgoing reconstruction of the FI, not simply pursuing a restricted debate within one component of the present divided movement.

In my view courses 1 and 3 rank equal worst of the possible answers to our problem of international perspective.

4) The fourth, more difficult, course, is to declare our willingness to discuss seriously the prospect of fusion - as a separate sympathising section or with a tendency rights - with the USFI, and attempt from this standpoint to generate discussion and debate within the USFI sections. Were discussions to occur we could be well-placed to intervene in US developments and in the delayed USFI World Congress discussion. We could hope and expect that at least some of our programmatic and analytical points would draw a favourable response and possibly open support from individual USFI militants, perhaps whole tendencies. Such a response might well create conditions to reassess our future prospects in a more favourable light.

By setting out in this way Galib crutely to generate the maximum public involvement and interest; and combining this with serious work in the class struggle in Britain, we could take steps that would reestablish the WSL as a factor in the international movement with something to contribute. It would be the best means of seeking to attract any non-sectarian unaffiliated forces internationally, and the best forces from the SWP. It is our best hope of breaking out of the British backwater, and utilising the standing which the WSL still retains on an international level to promote a real fight for political clarification.

Central issues which we should raise with the USFI should include Central America, Cuba and Iran as well as the politics of the "turn to industry".

Is such a course of action feasible? There are no guarantees, but I think there is a good chance it could happen. We should remember that the tiny Milan-based LOR managed to draw the 10-times Mandelito group in Italy into 18 months of leadership discussions, involving leading USFI figures, around a proposal for fusion. According to Mandel, the reason the USFI put such resources into this (and put up with LOR sectarian antics) is because they wish to open up discussions with the WSL. Our group has a much greater standing, record, and ability to rival the official USFI section in Britain: we should be able to exploit this to secure discussions which go beyond leadership-level wrangles with the SL to a public, international discussion.

5) As far as the Moronists are concerned, they have repeatedly shown their willingness to devote resources to discussions with the WSL. Most recently, it was only the divisions in the WSL over the Malvinas and a sectarian lurch by TILC which combined to bring a decision on our part to proceed no further with a dialogue. The Moronists clearly recognise us as potential competitors: we should consider whether it is not in our interests to pursue the mooted public debate on their Theses document, their attitude to women's and gay rights, and some of their policies and pronouncements on Latin America.

6) On the eventual outcome of such talks/debates/polemics - the possibilities that may or may not arise, the further upheavals that may erupt to change yet again the face of the world movement - there can be no guarantees. But course (4) - possibly combined with (5) - would provide an incentive to enrich and strengthen our own positions, and bring stimulus to the flagging or non-existent internal and theoretical life of the WSL, broadening the horizons of our members and putting them on their toes on the key issues of the crisis of the FI. In this way we can go forward - rather than backwards towards sectarianism - after the sorry experience of TILC.

Gmail: 26. October 27 1983

For the NC, November 19

ON THE USFI: FUNDAMENTALS FIRST, TACTICS SECOND

Kinnell

"Bolsheviks first discuss and decide the fundamental line in every important question, and then discuss its tactical application".

James P Cannon, "On 'Unity with the Shachtmanites'".

1. At the October 30 EC, comrade Cunliffe proposed an international orientation towards fusion discussions with the USFI. He expands on this in IB75, and I have discussed it further at some length with him privately.

Such an orientation is not ruled out in principle. But it seems to me to raise serious problems. These notes discuss those problems.

2. The major problem is this: the precondition for any such manoeuvre in relation to the USFI is that we ourselves have a clear assessment of and attitude to the USFI. But we don't.

And if Cunliffe's proposal gets a majority, it is likely to be through an alliance of different currents in the League who agree on the tactical gambit but have very different basic attitudes to the USFI.

At our February conference, both documents on 'The Crisis of the FI' - Cunliffe's, which I supported, and Parsons' - were defeated.

Moreover, there were differences among the supporters of each document. I, and many other comrades, would characterise the USFI as centrist (i.e. not consistently revolutionary Marxist, but wavering, and reformist on some issues, like Castroism). Many of those who also supported Cunliffe's document, and its sharp criticism of the USFI, wouldn't.

They in turn are subdivided into those who don't think it is centrist, and those who think that it is centrist but that we should avoid stating such a conclusion so as not to have them refuse to talk to us.

Parsons' February conference document advocated an "orientation towards fusion with the USFI", and its general line (as I understand it) was that not only the USFI but also the Morenists, Lambertists, etc. are serious Trotskyist movements whose weaknesses are less important than their strengths.

Many of these who voted for Parsons' document because they found Cunliffe's sectarian in tone would be far from agreeing with Parsons' full conclusions.

Cunliffe's proposal could well get a majority on the basis of an alliance of the following groups:

A. Parsons and (I fear) the rest of his faction.

B. The Oxford faction, who have begun to orient towards the USFI for their own special reasons.

C. A current in the organisation which used to be represented best by comrade Traven - comrades who have no higher opinion of the USFI than I have, but who are depressed and defeatist about the condition of the League, and draw the conclusion that a bigger mess would at least be better than a smaller mess.

D. Comrades who may have an attitude on the USFI like comrade Gunther's on the SL in our discussions some months ago: they don't have illusions in the USFI, they don't think a real fusion is possible or desirable, they haven't despaired of the League, but they think an orientation towards fusion would be useful as a tactic to win over individuals and groups from the USFI.

To go in for a tactic on the basis of a vague coalition of such varying views on the underlying issues of basic politics would be foolish in the extreme and potentially disruptive of the work of the League.

3. I have some points of agreement with Cunliffe. International link-ups of tiny groups, each of which can lay no great claim to give leadership for or even have much detailed knowledge of struggles outside its own immediate arena, are of limited value. This was the major reason (aside from the specific problems with the RWL) why some of us were always sceptical about the prospects of TILC; the same reservations obviously apply to the international grouping comprising the PTT, SF, and ourselves.

The USFI is the most important current of would-be Trotskyism, and generally it is more useful to seek dialogue with and attempt to win sympathisers within it than to focus on the 'Trotskyist family's' wide range of small dissident groups. Most of these groups are pretty primitive and sectarian, and unreformable. As comrade Parsons aptly put it at our February conference, a lot of the small groups are small because they're useless.

4. Nevertheless, we have to start from where we are. And that gives us three essential options, and three only:

- a) To group together our international co-thinkers as best we can, while avoiding all false pretences. From that basis to seek contacts, dialogue, etc.
- b) To collapse into national isolation.
- c) To go into, or become a satellite of, one of the bigger international groupings.

Cunliffe's proposal for fusion is supposed to be a fourth option. But it isn't really. It is a confused compromise between a version of (c) (go into the USFI) and a version of (a) (a tactical approach to the USFI would be one of the possible activities to be considered by a small international grouping). Some comrades would support Cunliffe because they support option (c), others because they support option (a), others for fundamentally escapist reasons, because they want to deceive other themselves that a fourth option exists.

5. If I have understood him correctly, Cunliffe himself does not actually believe that a fusion with the USFI is desirable and possible. At most it is "not excluded". His proposal is intended chiefly as a tactical gambit.

Some other comrades, however, do believe that such a fusion is desirable and possible. What's wrong with this?

Our current (and the two pre-fusion organisations, and their political predecessors) have existed separate from the USFI for good political reasons. The basic issue is the USFI's loss of an independent working-class point of view in favour of the role of helping along 'revolutionary processes' led by petty-bourgeois forces. That issue remains. Indeed, it has become more acute.

If we had been in a better state to influence events, then maybe the US SWP's move to Stalinism via Castroism would have provoked a reaction towards independent working class politics among other sectors of the USFI. In fact it has been otherwise. The SWP's shift has dragged the other sectors of the USFI towards a more uncritical attitude towards Cuba, the Sandinistas, the FDR/FMLN, etc. Whereas in 1979 the European sections of the USFI described Cuba quite lucidly and talked about building a Trotskyist group there, now they agree with the SWP that the Castro bureaucracy is 'revolutionary' and 'proletarian', and only protest that it is inconsistent and 'centrist' rather than fully Marxist.

Could we express our independent politics just as well as a faction inside the USFI? No. We would lose the possibility of taking our politics directly to the working class and (so far as we have resources) to the left internationally, in exchange for the rather limited possibilities of internal debate in the not very broad, not very open, not very working-class, and thoroughly befuddled ranks of the USFI.

6. Look at it more concretely. In Britain we have had recent experience of fusion discussions with the SL. Though the SL themselves proposed the discussions, they were (according to Cunliffe's own account) evidently uninterested in the face-to-face discussions. And they did not even bother to reply to the political letter we sent them.

In day-to-day work every week gives us fresh evidence that a fusion with the SL (if somehow it could be engineered) would be unworkable. Unless we simply knuckled under and forgot our politics, it would mean huge battles and the fusion blowing apart again within months.

So no advantage to us in Britain.

In Australia the local USFI section is pro-SWP - not very big, declining, sectarian and bureaucratic. (The former pro-European-USFI group has been very effectively eaten up without trace). Our comrades make a point of relating to the USFI group and have some contacts among its youth. But fusion? As a minority faction inside the USFI group we would be on a hiding to nothing. Besides, it wouldn't happen: they won't even agree to discussions.

The USA? A number of the people recently expelled or resigned from the SWP have come together in a new group, which will probably link up with the USFI. It may be desirable for the PTT comrades to try to join this new group.

But even in that case an international WSL/PTT/SF approach to the USFI for fusion discussions is not necessarily the best way to go about it. The comrades may be better advised to dissolve the PTT and join individually.

Also, the new group has selectively organised those least inclined to draw serious political conclusions from the recent evolution of the SWP. The Minneapolis group, for example, was not invited to the founding conference. There may be a differentiation between pro-USFI people and those who are re-thinking more seriously. There seems no point in tying ourselves to the pro-USFI option in advance.

Would an approach to the USFI for fusion discussions give us access to other USFI sections, outside Britain, Australia, and the USA?

Both pre-fusion organisations had experience of discussions with the USFI. And that experience tells us that the answer is no. Cunliffe argues that the USFI would behave better in discussions than the SL. But the evidence says different.

7. I asserted above that the Oxford faction had "begun to orient towards the USFI for their own special reasons." I should explain.

Logically the Oxford faction should be the most hostile to the USFI of all the currents in the League. They identify more than any other current in the League with the 1960s IC/SLL, which used to denounce the USFI as 'Pabloite traitors'.

Unfortunately, the Oxford faction's present-day involvement in its faction-fight against the WSL majority seems to overshadow its historic allegiance to the faction-fight against the USFI - and even to overshadow the live political issues, from attitudes to Castro to attitudes to Kinnoch, which separate them from the USFI.

On precisely the basic questions of world politics which underly our day-to-day differences with the USFI - Stalinism, 'camp' politics versus class politics, petty bourgeois anti-imperialism - the faction leaders have recently and explicitly declared solidarity with the USFI against the EC majority. They have also shown a sensitivity and receptiveness towards Socialist Action opinion much greater than towards League opinion.

A) In EC discussion, on the Korean airliner affair, Smith cited the Socialist Action editorial as a model of how it should have been covered, in contrast to our own editorial.

B) Ditto on Grenada. At the EC Smith said (bitterly) that he preferred SA's front page to ours. Later, perhaps more significantly, he motivated his (heated)

insistence that Grenada rather than Greenham Common should have been the front page lead in the following paper by complaining that he had felt "a laughing-stock" when SA people criticised the paper.

The same high sensitivity to SA opinion was shown by Smith's comment at the EC on the paper's report on the disputes round B. at the O. conference. We had been "ridiculously sectarian" towards SA, he exclaimed. Remember: practically all the non-SA people round B. at the O. conference found SA "ridiculously sectarian" and sided with us! But Smith evidently saw things more easily from the SA point of view than the League majority's.

C) In a number of debates Smith has attacked the EC majority's views as "cranky" in contrast to the "normal Trotskyist" view.

What is this "normal Trotskyism"? It is not the great stock of classic texts which on many questions can still be applied more or less directly and on many others give very substantial guidance. Smith has specifically spoken of "normal Trotskyist" attitudes on such issues as post-colonial imperialism. No amount of reading Trotsky can possibly tell us about the changes in imperialism since 1945.

Necessarily, Smith is talking about a body of ideas distinct from the Trotskyism of Trotsky, a body of ideas which has developed since 1945 - in fact, about the common basic stock of ideas of which all the main phases, strands and factions of post-1950 Trotskyism are variants.

The most sophisticated and serious representative of this stock of ideas is the USFI majority.

The politics of the EC majority certainly are at a tangent to this "normal Trotskyism". Deliberately so. In our view it is not only distinct from, but in many respects quite out of tune with, the Trotskyism of Trotsky.

The faction leaders also used to express an aspiration to develop away from this "normal Trotskyism". While still using the term 'Pabloism', they recognised that the 'anti-Pabloites' often had just the same traits - and thus that we had to move away not only from 'Pabloism' but also from the stock common to both 'Pabloism' and 'anti-Pabloism'.

But then the faction leaders capitulated to 'Trotskyist public opinion' over the South Atlantic war. And they got caught in a blind gang-warfare factional battle against the League majority.

A great deal of the factional battle has been fought at a sub-political level, with repeated petty point-scoring and squabbles, appeals to the personal authority of comrades Smith and Jones, and wild accusations (that the majority is out to crush the minority, that the majority position on Ireland 'really means' a separate Protestant state or opposition to British withdrawal, etc. etc.) Nevertheless the faction leaders have had to construct some sort of ideological axis for their fight, if only implicitly.

Focusing their fire on our alleged 'revisionism', they have been dogmatists in search of a dogma. And they have taken 'normal Trotskyism' as their dogma. They have sought to present themselves as reassuringly orthodox and common-sense (in terms of vaguely-Trotskyist left public opinion), as against the 'sophisticated' (Smith's word, not mine!) ideas of the EC majority - as the common-sense 'workers' in contrast to the 'intellectuals' (again, Smith's words not mine).

All this drives the faction leaders towards ideological conciliation with the USFI, and towards sensitivity and receptiveness to USFI opinion.

At the same time the faction leaders' ever-more-irresponsible denunciations of the League can only push those who listen to them towards a split.

This doesn't mean that the faction is about to split and join the USFI tomorrow. The faction leaders, and many of the faction members, know well that they could not live with SL leadership directing their trade union work. In between his diatribes about 'censorship', Smith must know that he would not have quite the

same free public expression for his personal views in the SL!

But politics have their own logic. Remember Andrea C's bitter diatribes against 'liquidationism' when some of us mooted B. as a possible 'legal cover' for our work in the O. if our own paper were made illegal? Now that same comrade is writing for B. and not for our paper!

The faction's attitudes may lead where they never intended. And certainly they would be a serious inner weakness for us if we were to attempt a closer orientation to the USFI. They could help propel some comrades - perhaps not faction members - into the homeland of 'normal Trotskyism'... to make a 'fusion with the USFI' individually when we fail to do it collectively.

8. Is there still a case for Cunliffe's proposal? Yes, up to a point. The split between the Mandel faction and the Castro-Stalinists around the SWP-US which is now, it seems, almost inescapably underway, may set some brains whirring. I would be cautious about predicting huge upheavals: there has been a cold split for some time, and the Mandel faction has had plenty of time to come to terms with it. But I may be wrong. Besides, written into the logic of the situation is a rapprochement between the Mandel faction and the Moreno faction as the next step, and that could set some brains whirring too.

But I think that even apart from the problems of our own internal condition I would be against Cunliffe's proposal. We have to choose carefully when we make such proposals, selecting the time when they are likely to have a real impact. Otherwise we debase the currency and maybe, thought a blank shot now, stymie ourselves for the future.

The USFI majority is not moving in our direction. It is not recruiting new, fresh forces in numbers.

If we make the approach to the USFI that Cunliffe suggests, I suspect the most likely alternative is that nothing very much at all will happen. That is, no more will happen than with the SL's 'fusion proposal' to us. There will be some desultory discussions, and some desultory factional trickery by the USFI. The word will be put around that we are about to fuse with the USFI (as previously the word was put around that we were fusing with the SL: just last weekend I talked to a contact in Leicester who had been told by the local SL that we were already fused with the SL in London, and separate only outside London!). The USFI will use this 'forthcoming fusion' to boost itself. And that will be about it.

Another possibility is that the USFI decides to pursue more seriously the 'unity offensive' against us which the SL ham-handedly tried. They are certainly well aware of the divisions within the League, and psychologically geared to this sort of factional operation.

Then what will happen? The USFI will be profusely friendly, offering comrade Smith international speaking engagements and all the rest of it, while at the same time trying to stick the knife in. My guess is that they will put the word round that progress towards fusion is going just fine, and there is only one obstacle - the 'sectarianism', 'bureaucratic methods', and 'cranky ideas' (so remote from 'normal Trotskyism') of people like Carolan...

One obvious gambit is that the USFI will ask us for a declaration that they are a revolutionary Marxist current, or that they are the Fourth International. This simple gambit (used by the USFI before, and also used on us by the Morenists) will immediately divide the League into three camps:

A. Those who really believe that the USFI is revolutionary Marxist, despite this or that error.

B. Those who don't, but who think that we should say they are, tongue-in-cheek, for the sake of getting discussions.

C. Those (myself among them) who believe that the USFI is not revolutionary

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Marxist, and that we cannot tell lies to the revolutionary left about this. We can say that we see the USFI as sincere revolutionaries; we can say that we are prepared to enter a discussion with minds open to be convinced about the Marxist quality of their politics; but we cannot endorse their politics as revolutionary Marxist in advance of discussion.

9. My suggestions:

a) We propose that the December meeting sets up some sort of organised liaison between ourselves, the PTT, and SF. I am entirely open to suggestions about what name (if any) should be given to this international link-up.

b) We propose a joint international bulletin, to be produced by the WSL in English, French and German (and if possible other languages). This should normally be public, though special supplements internal to WSL/PTT/SF could be produced.

c) Through written discussion and occasional international meetings, we attempt to develop joint documents with PTT and SF on major political questions. The three groups should also discuss the work of all of us in our home arenas.

d) The international link-up should declare firmly, but without any grandiloquence or false pretences, that it, and not the RWL/LOR, represents the continuity of TILC.

e) We seek contacts and dialogue with other forces, including those Trotskyist groups we already have some relations with.

f) The international bulletin should be edited with a view to being a tool for intervention in relation to the USFI. Projects like Cunliffe's pamphlet on Cuba will fit well into this plan.

g) Prior to any approach to the USFI for fusion discussions, we should attempt to formulate a clear principled outline assessment of the USFI and its place in the world Trotskyist spectrum, in the WSL and jointly with SF and the PTT.

These suggestions are modest, much more so than the glittering schemes about whole sections of the USFI breaking off towards us. But there are periods when what Marxists can do is modest. Bolshevism means doing the small tasks of those periods as resolutely as the big tasks of periods when openings are greater.

10. A final word is perhaps necessary. In these notes I have had to put some emphasis on our internal problems and the limitations of what we can do internationally in the immediate term. But realism on these counts should not be confused with defeatism.

Despite everything, we are doing pretty good work in the class struggle. Despite the pettifogging cries and chants of the two dead-end factions (Oxford and Coventry) the majority of the League is educating and clarifying itself. With a commitment to clarity and honesty of ideas; to developing away from 'normal Trotskyism' towards a thoroughly renovated Trotskyism; to bringing together and consolidating international co-thinkers, without losing ourselves in will o' the wisp schemes; and to the class struggle, we can be sure of doing good service to the cause of international socialism.